

# CAMPUS

## Private schools a status symbol?

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After the mid-seventies a number of schools have been set up in the private sector and a trend is being noticed among the parents of middle and upper income brackets to patronise such institutes.

Private schools have mushroomed in the metropolitan capital and also elsewhere in the country to make the best use of the vacuum.

In the last few years new schools have been built to cater for the primary level student. These have mainly been set up under the universal primary education programme.

Very few secondary schools have been set up by the govt.

This shortage is being filled by the private educational institutions.

The private schools are of many kinds. The 'kindergartens' based on the foreign model cater for students upto class three.

Here the board's syllabus is followed for the Bengali and Maths course but for English the Radiant Way Series is taught. This is done to differentiate them from the govt schools.

In some such institutions Arabic is also taught on a compulsory basis. The fee ranges from taka hundred to three hundred per month.

These schools are mainly housed in small rented apartments where even the kitchen is converted to classroom for the maximisation of space.

In most of these places there is no such thing as playground or proper library. The staff comprises of fresh graduates or undergraduates but as the fee is high, the teachers make it a point to correct the homework regularly.

The other set of schools are those which cater for children upto class five.

These institutions follow the boards syllabus and are most co-educational institutions.

The teaching staff in these places is fairly experienced consisting of graduates and master degree holders.

Fee at the minimum level is taka one hundred per month and goes upto taka three hundred and fifty per month.

These are also housed in rented places which are usually houses converted to schools. Adequate space is a problem and hence children are packed like sardines in dingy like rooms.

The third set of schools are those which cater for children of all ages starting from nursery to class VIII.

In such places the number of students studying in class

VII and VIII are extremely limited as parents prefer to patronise schools which are upto class X since it is next to impossible to get admission in the higher classes in any other institution.

The fourth and the most popular private schools are those which cater from nursery to class X. They are never without students.

At the moment a number of such schools have made name for excellent performance at the SSC level.

They are usually staffed by teachers who are B Ed's and MEd's and are housed in their own buildings.

The fee varies from Tk 75 per month to Tk 400 at the highest level. Uddayan, Agrani, Ideal Trinity and Willes Little Flower are some such schools.

These are never without student. Not all who sit for

Affluent parents do not want to send their children to a govt school where every Tom, Harry and Dick studies.

They do not want their children to mix with children of peons or drivers and learn bad language. They don't want their children to sit in classrooms where the walls are covered with writings with no fan on top and filthy bathrooms.

On the contrary they buy a seat at the private educational institutions where the academic atmosphere is not congenial.

These schools bring with them other perks too such as a better peer group and cleaner atmosphere.

A mother who happens to be an associate professor at the DU said, "I have put my children at Uddayan because I do not want them to learn filthy language spoken by children of some govt schools.

At the private institutions there is some discipline which I cannot expect at the govt school as classes are very large and the teachers are not that sincere.

Said a business executives wife, 'I find these private educational institutions are a boon. I came to Dhaka in June where would I get a seat at a govt school at the middle of the year in a govt school.

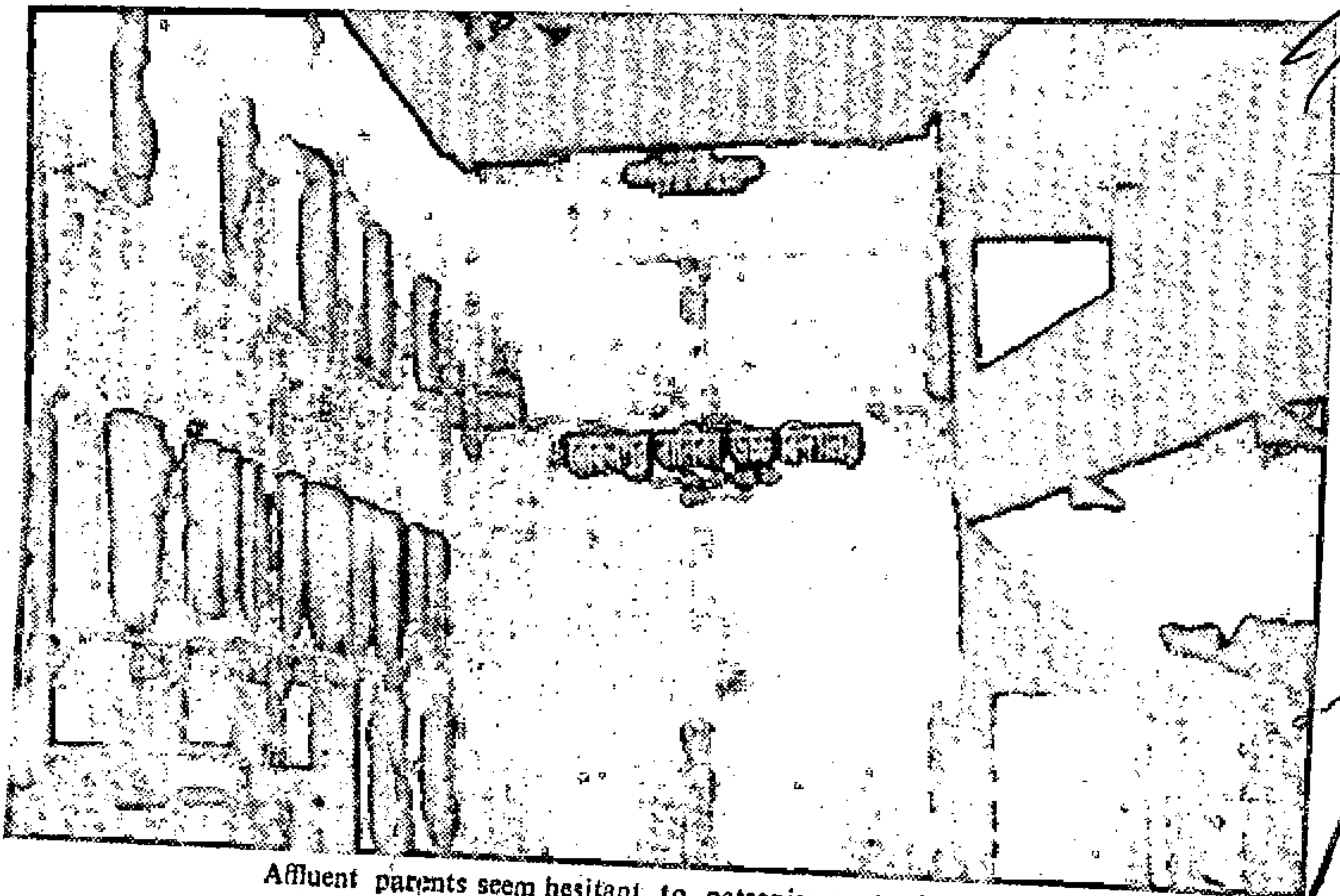
Teacher who wishes to remain unidentified said, at the private schools there is no such thing as seat limit. Students are taken in at the beginning, middle and end of the year.

It does not matter whether the student is bright or dull. Often with too many dull students we the teachers are at our wits end. For the school authorities it is the money that they are worried about.

As long as the parents are willing to pay the fees they are ensured of a seat.

Now a days parents are ready to pay donations to get their children admitted into a good school.

The middle class particularly is interested in these schools because of better education being imparted here and also because they are status symbols.



Affluent parents seem hesitant to patronise govt schools.

the entrance examinations of these places qualify. Many are disappointed and have to look for a place elsewhere.

Talking to a good number of parents it is gathered that private schools are status symbols for many.